## **30<sup>th</sup> Annual USOE MLK Contest**

**Sr. High Grand Prize Essay Winner** Cheyenne Chrisman – Alpine Academy Essay title "The Choice"

## The Choice

"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." Every day we make a choice to speak up or to be silent, whether it's with bullying, sexual abuse, harassment or blackmail. Sometimes even just asking for help. Dr. Martin Luther King chose to speak up. He chose to stop the cycle, and that choice has changed America for the better.

I believe without Dr. Martin Luther King we would have continued the cycle, it would have gotten worse, and we will never know the answer to that question. I feel this quote means that you can stand up for what you believe in, however if you stay silent you will regret it.

In my own personal experience I watched my friend get bullied. I had known her for many years, due to my 4-H group. She was three years older than I was. When I entered high school she was already a senior. She didn't talk much to me or anyone really, just an occasional "hi" and "bye" but nothing more than that. It was October when they found her, no note, no warning, and no goodbyes. Everyone at my school knew why; we didn't need a note or goodbyes. The Front page of the news paper said "Girl Bullied to Death" everyone was silent for two months at school, in town, and even at 4-H meetings.

Every night, and even now, I don't go to bed without thinking "what if"? What if I hugged her? What if I wrapped my arms around her and said I am here for you? She had a future; she had dreams just like you and me, a family who loved her, a college to go to in the fall. All she is now is an index card in the back of the year book saying "Rest in Peace." But

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not to me or the people who loved her; her memory will live on. Never again will I shy away; never again will I allow that to happen in my presence. Everyone forgot why she was bullied; people only asked "Why wasn't it stopped?"

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Martin Luther King, Jr.